**Before**

**The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio**

In the Matter of the Application of Ohio )

Edison Company, The Cleveland Electric )

Illuminating Company and The Toledo )

Edison Company for Authority to Provide ) Case No. 14-1297-EL-SSO

for a Standard Service Offer Pursuant to )

R.C. 4928.143 in the Form of an Electric )

Security Plan. )

**Memorandum Contra the Interlocutory Appeal of the Office of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel and Northwest Ohio Aggregation Coalition**

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Frank P. Darr (Reg. No. 0025469)

(Counsel of Record)

Matthew R. Pritchard (Reg. No. 0088070)

McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC

21 East State Street, 17TH Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

Telephone: (614) 469-8000

Telecopier: (614) 469-4653

fdarr@mwncmh.com

mpritchard@mwncmh.com

**May 23, 2016 Attorneys for Industrial Energy Users-Ohio**

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel (“OCC”) and Northwest Ohio Aggregation Coalition (“NOAC”) filed an interlocutory appeal of an Attorney Examiner’s Entry directing Ohio Edison Company, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, and The Toledo Edison Company (“FirstEnergy”) to file tariff sheets in compliance with the Opinion and Order by May 13, 2016. Joint Interlocutory Appeal, Request for Certification to Full Commission and Application for Review and Comments on Tariffs by Northwest Ohio Aggregation Coalition and the Office of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel (May 16, 2016) (“Interlocutory Appeal”). According to OCC and NOAC, the inability of FirstEnergy to comply with the terms of the Opinion and Order due to an intervening decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (“FERC”) “preempts” the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (“Commission”) from proceeding with the approval of the tariff sheets to implement the standard service offer (“SSO”) approved in the Opinion and Order in this case. As relief, OCC and NOAC seek the continuation of the current electric security plan (“ESP”). OCC and NOAC, however, have not presented a sound legal basis for the Commission to grant the Interlocutory Appeal. Further, OCC and NOAC fail to demonstrate any injury from the implementation of the Entry they are challenging, but customers of FirstEnergy will suffer a detriment if the appeal is granted. Accordingly, the Interlocutory Appeal should be denied.

# Background

The Commission issued its Opinion and Order in this matter on March 31, 2016. Opinion and Order (Mar. 13, 2016). In the Opinion and Order, the Commission modified and approved an application for an ESP to be effective June 1, 2016 and directed FirstEnergy to file tariff sheets in compliance with the Commission’s decision. *Id*. at 122. After the Commission issued its Opinion and Order, FERC issued a decision that has at least delayed the approval of the purchased power agreement (“PPA”) on which the authorized Retail Rate Stability Rider (“RRS”) was based. *Electric Power Supply Association v. FirstEnergy Solutions*, FERC Docket No. EL16-34, Order Granting Complaint (Apr. 27, 2016) (“*ESPA*”). FirstEnergy sought rehearing of the Opinion and Order and proposed an alternative to the proposed RRS. Ohio Edison Company, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, and The Toledo Edison Company’s Application for Rehearing (May 2, 2016). Other intervenors also sought rehearing and opposed the alternative proposal submitted by FirstEnergy. In response to the applications for rehearing, the Commission granted rehearing for further consideration of the applications for rehearing. Entry on Rehearing (May 11, 2016).

While the matters discussed above were transpiring, FirstEnergy sought an extension of the order to file tariff sheets that complied with the Opinion and Order. Ohio Edison Company, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, and The Toledo Edison Company’s Motion For Extension of Time to File Tariffs (Apr. 29, 2016). On May 10, 2016, the Attorney Examiner directed FirstEnergy to file tariff sheets that complied with the Commission’s Opinion and Order by May 13, 2016. Entry (May 10, 2016) (“Attorney Examiner’s Entry”).

FirstEnergy made the compliance filing on May 13, 2016. The filing contains a tariff sheet for the RRS. The rates for the RRS for each customer class are set at zero. Letter from Eileen Mikkelsen to Barcy McNeal on Behalf of the Ohio Edison Company, Attachment 2, Tariff Sheet 127 (May 13, 2016). (Similar filings were made on behalf of the other two electric distribution utilities.) The tariff sheets also contained sheets that would implement other terms and conditions such as the expansion of the interruptible load program and the non-market based transmission pilot. *Id*.

On May 20, 2016, the Staff of the Commission filed a letter stating that it had reviewed the tariff sheets filed by FirstEnergy and concluded that the sheets appear to be in compliance with the Commission’s Opinion and Order. Letter from Tamara Turkenton and David Lipthratt to Docketing Division (May 20, 2016).

On May 16, 2016, however, OCC and NOAC filed an Interlocutory Appeal of the Attorney Examiner’s Entry. OCC and NOAC assert that it was error to require FirstEnergy to file tariff sheets that otherwise cannot be implemented due to the recent ruling of FERC. Interlocutory Appeal at 2. In support of the Interlocutory Appeal, OCC and NOAC assert that FirstEnergy’s proposal in its application for rehearing is different from the proposal approved in the Opinion and Order and the Entry directing FirstEnergy to file tariffs contravenes the ruling by FERC requiring the PPA on which FirstEnergy was relying to be filed for FERC review and approval. OCC and NOAC further assert that “[t]hrough its tariff filing, FirstEnergy is attempting to withdraw and terminate its application” in violation of the process for withdrawing an application for an ESP set out in R.C. 4928.143. *Id*. at 8. OCC and NOAC conclude that the Commission must order FirstEnergy to continue the SSO under the terms and conditions of the current offer. *Id*.

# OCC and NOAC fail to state a lawful basis for granting the Interlocutory Appeal and staying implementation of the tariff sheets filed in compliance with the Opinion and Order

Regardless of the merits of OCC and NOAC’s position on the viability of the RRS after the FERC order in *EPSA* or the lawfulness of FirstEnergy’s proposal to modify the RRS, the Interlocutory Appeal is without merit. Nothing in the tariffs filed by FirstEnergy is inconsistent with the Opinion and Order, as the Staff found, and the tariff sheets’ inclusion of rates set to zero would not impose any injury on the customers represented by OCC and NOAC. On the other hand, the relief that OCC and NOAC seek would work an irreparable hardship on those customers that have sought to enter new contractual relationships with FirstEnergy and competitive retail electric service providers in reliance on the Opinion and Order. Accordingly, the Commission should deny the Interlocutory Appeal.

Rule 4901-1-15, Ohio Administrative Code, provides that a party may seek an interlocutory appeal. Divisions (A) and (B) of the rule govern the circumstances under which a party may seek an interlocutory appeal and provide:

(A) Any party who is adversely affected thereby may take an immediate interlocutory appeal to the commission from any ruling issued under rule 4901-1-14 of the Administrative Code or any oral ruling issued during a public hearing or prehearing conference that does any of the following:

(1) Grants a motion to compel discovery or denies a motion for a protective order.

(2) Denies a motion to intervene, terminates a party's right to participate in a proceeding, or requires intervenors to consolidate their examination of witnesses or presentation of testimony.

(3) Refuses to quash a subpoena.

(4) Requires the production of documents or testimony over an objection based on privilege.

(B) Except as provided in paragraph (A) of this rule, no party may take an interlocutory appeal from any ruling issued under rule 4901-1-14 of the Administrative Code or any oral ruling issued during a public hearing or prehearing conference unless the appeal is certified to the commission by the legal director, deputy legal director, attorney examiner, or presiding hearing officer. The legal director, deputy legal director, attorney examiner, or presiding hearing officer shall not certify such an appeal unless he or she finds that the appeal presents a new or novel question of interpretation, law, or policy, or is taken from a ruling which represents a departure from past precedent and an immediate determination by the commission is needed to prevent the likelihood of undue prejudice or expense to one or more of the parties, should the commission ultimately reverse the ruling in question.

Since this appeal does not seek review of a circumstance set out under division (A), division (B) requires OCC and NOAC to demonstrate that their appeal presents a new or novel question of interpretation, law, or policy, or is taken from a ruling which represents a departure from past precedent and an immediate determination by the Commission is needed to prevent the likelihood of undue prejudice or expense to one or more of the parties, should the Commission ultimately reverse the ruling in question.

As a ground for granting the Interlocutory Appeal, OCC and NOAC assert that the Attorney Examiner’s Entry presents a novel issue. Interlocutory Appeal at 4. The facts, however, do not demonstrate that the Attorney Examiner’s Entry did anything other than manage the case. Specifically, the Commission ordered FirstEnergy to file tariffs on May 13, 2016. The FERC order on April 27 upset FirstEnergy’s plans. Two days after FERC released *EPSA*, FirstEnergy asked for additional time to make its compliance filing. Based on that request, the Attorney Examiner’s Entry on May 10 granted FirstEnergy until May 13 to file the tariff sheets that complied with the Opinion and Order. As the Staff determined, the tariff sheets comply with the terms of the Opinion and Order. Thus, the Attorney Examiner’s Entry does not present any new or novel issue.

In the guise of claiming that a new issue is presented, however, OCC and NOAC assert that the rates filed with the tariff sheets, if implemented, “will put into effect standard service offer rates that are fundamentally inconsistent with the FERC preemptive ruling.” *Id*. at 6. As OCC and NOAC explain, the Commission approved the RRS on the basis that there would be an approved PPA and FERC has not provided that approval. *Id*. at 4-5. They then claim that accepting the RRS contravenes FERC authority and is preempted. *Id*. at 5. Accordingly, OCC and NOAC assert that residential customers will be harmed because the retail tariff will be inconsistent with FERC’s authority to review a PPA. *Id*. at 5-6. Further, OCC and NOAC allege that the tariff sheets do not comply with the Opinion and Order. *Id*. at 8.

OCC and NOAC’s stated grounds for the Interlocutory Appeal should be rejected for several reasons.

First, although OCC and NOAC claim that there is something in the tariff sheets that is inconsistent with the FERC’s decision in *EPSA*, OCC and NOAC do not point to anything in those tariffs that conflicts with the Opinion and Order, and there is not. Moreover, approval of the compliance filing would not trigger any apparent conflict between FERC and the Commission, but there is no explanation of what that conflict might be. Accordingly, there is no merit in OCC and NOAC’s claim that EPSA somehow “preempts” the Commission from approving the compliance filing.

OCC and NOAC also must show undue prejudice or harm, but do not do so. OCC and NOAC’s stated concern is that the Commission may authorize FirstEnergy to bill and collect under the rider. As OCC and NOAC explain, “If the PUCO authorizes tariffs consistent with its Opinion and Order without rates being subject to refund (which the PUCO has declined to order), customers may be unable to obtain refunds for charges later determined to be unlawful.” Interlocutory Appeal at 6.

As filed, however, the tariff sheets set the RRS at zero for all customers, and if accepted by the Commission, RRS rates will remain at zero until the Commission authorizes some other rate. R.C. 4905.22 (utility may charge only the rate on file). Simply put, OCC and NOAC have not demonstrated any prejudice resulting from the Attorney Examiner’s Entry.

On the other hand, other customers that have taken action based on the terms and conditions approved as part of the modified and approved ESP will be injured if the Commission grants the Interlocutory Appeal and directs FirstEnergy to continue to operate under the current SSO. The ESP to become effective on June 1, 2016 contains provisions expanding the interruptible program and a transmission pilot that will offer the opportunity for some customers to reduce their total energy bills by managing their demand levels. These programs that have the effect of reducing system demand during peak periods have the potential to benefit all customers, including those served by OCC and NOAC. For example, the benefits of the interruptible program include increased system reliability and stability, the prevention of load shedding (*i.e.,* rolling blackouts) during emergency events, and job retention. See citations to transcript in the Post-Hearing Brief of Ohio Edison Company, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, and The Toledo Edison Company at 108 and n. 521-23 (Feb. 16, 2016) (“Cos. Initial Brief”); Post-Hearing Brief of the Ohio Energy Group at 24-25 (Feb. 16, 2016) (“OEG Initial Brief”); and Initial Brief in Support of ESP IV Stipulation by Nucor Steel Marion, Inc. at 12-15 (“Nucor Initial Brief”). By providing eligible customers a means of reducing their electric generation expenses, continuation of a modified interruptible program also furthers Ohio industrial companies’ effectiveness in the global economy. Cos. Initial Brief at 148. As the record demonstrates, an interruptible rate program advances “numerous benefits, including the promotion of economic development and the retention of manufacturing jobs.” *In the Matter of the Application of Ohio Power Company for Authority to Establish a Standard Service Offer Pursuant to R.C. 4928.143, in the Form of an Electric Security Plan*, Case Nos. 13-2385-EL-SSO, *et al.,* Opinion and Order at 40 (Feb. 25, 2015). Thus, although OCC and NOAC cannot demonstrate any prejudice if the RRS is implemented at a rate of zero for all customers, granting the relief OCC and NOAC seek will harm not only large energy users, but all customers of FirstEnergy generally.

# Conclusion

OCC and NOAC fail to state a substantive ground for granting the relief they seek in the Interlocutory Appeal. Further, good policy dictates that the Interlocutory Appeal be denied.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Frank P. Darr*

Frank P. Darr (Reg. No. 0025469)

(Counsel of Record)

Matthew R. Pritchard (Reg. No. 0088070)

McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC

21 East State Street, 17TH Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

Telephone: (614) 469-8000

Telecopier: (614) 469-4653

fdarr@mwncmh.com

mpritchard@mwncmh.com

**Attorneys for Industrial Energy Users-Ohio**

**Certificate of Service**

In Accordance with Rule 4901-1-05, Ohio Administrative Code, "The PUCO's e‑filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document upon the following parties." In addition, I hereby certify that a service copy of the foregoing *Memorandum Contra the Interlocutory Appeal of the Office of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel and Northwest Ohio Aggregation Coalition*was sent by, or on behalf of, the undersigned counsel for IEU-Ohio, to the following parties of record this 23rd day of May 2016, *via* electronic transmission.

*/s/ Frank P. Darr*

Frank P. Darr

James W. Burk

(Counsel of Record)

Carrie M. Dunn

FIRSTENERGY SERVICE COMPANY 76 South Main Street

Akron, Ohio 44308

burkj@firstenergycorp.com

cdunn@firstenergycorp.com

James F. Lang

N. Trevor Alexander

CALFEE, HALTER & GRISWOLD LLP

The Calfee Building

1405 East Sixth Street

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

jlang@calfee.com

talexander@calfee.com

David A. Kutik

JONES DAY

901 Lakeside Avenue

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

dakutik@jonesday.com

**COUNSEL FOR OHIO EDISON COMPANY, THE CLEVELAND ELECTRIC ILLUMINATING COMPANY**

**THE TOLEDO EDISON COMPANY**

Michael L. Kurtz, Esq.

Kurt J. Boehm, Esq.

Jody Kyler Cohn, Esq.

BOEHM, KURTZ & LOWRY

36 East Seventh Street, Suite 1510

Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

mkurtz@BKLlawfirm.com

kboehm@BKLlawfirm.com

jkylercohn@BKLlawfirm.com

**COUNSEL FOR THE OHIO ENERGY GROUP**

Steven T. Nourse

Matthew J. Satterwhite

Yazen Alami

American Electric Power Service Corporation

1 Riverside Plaza 29th Floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215

stnourse@aep.com

mjsatterwhite@aep.com

yalami@aep.com

**COUNSEL FOR OHIO POWER COMPANY**

Bruce J. Weston

Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Larry S. Sauer

(Counsel of Record)

Maureen R. Willis

Kevin F. Moore

Ajay K. Kumar

William J. Michael

Assistant Consumers' Counsel

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

10 West Broad Street – Suite 1800

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Larry.sauer@occ.ohio.gov

maureen.willis@occ.ohio.gov

William.Michael@occ.ohio.gov

Kevin.moore@occ.ohio.gov

Ajay.kumar@occ.ohio.gov

**COUNSEL FOR THE OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL**

Barth E. Royer

Bell & Royer Co., LPA

33 South Grant Avenue

Columbus, Ohio 43215-3927

barthroyer@aol.com

Adrian Thompson

Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

200 Public Square, Suite 3500

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

athompson@taftlaw.com

**COUNSEL FOR CLEVELAND MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Marilyn L. Widman

Widman & Franklin, LLC

405 Madison Ave., Suite 1550

Toledo, Ohio 43604

Marilyn@wflawfirm.com

**COUNSEL FOR IBEW LOCAL 245**

Richard C. Sahli (0007360)

Richard Sahli Law Office, LLC

981 Pinewood Lane

Columbus, OH 43230-3662

rsahli@columbus.rr.com

Michael Soules

Earthjustice

1625 Massachusetts Ave. NW,

Suite #702

Washington, DC 20036

msoules@earthjustice.org

Shannon Fisk

(Counsel of Record)

Earthjustice

1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd.,

Suite #1675

Philadelphia, PA 19103

sfisk@earthjustice.org

Tony G. Mendoza

Kristin Henry

Sierra Club

85 Second Street, Second Floor

San Francisco, CA 94105-3459

tony.mendoza@sierraclub.org

kristin.henry@sierraclub.org

**COUNSEL FOR THE SIERRA CLUB**

Jennifer L. Spinosi (0089162)

(Counsel of Record)

Direct Energy

21 East State Street, 19th Floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215

jennifer.spinosi@directenergy.com

Gerit F. Hull

Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC

1717 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., 12th Fl.

Washington, D.C. 20006

ghull@eckertseamans.com

**COUNSEL FOR DIRECT ENERGY SERVICES, LLC, DIRECT ENERGY BUSINESS, LLC AND DIRECT ENERGY BUSINESS MARKETING, LLC**

Colleen L. Mooney

(Counsel of Record)

Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy

231 West Lima Street

Findlay, Ohio 45839-1793

cmooney@ohiopartners.org

**COUNSEL FOR OHIO PARTNERS FOR AFFORDABLE ENERGY**

Joseph E. Oliker

(Counsel of Record)

IGS Energy

6100 Emerald Parkway

Dublin, Ohio 43016

joliker@igsenergy.com

**COUNSEL FOR IGS ENERGY**

Celia M. Kilgard

Devin D. Parram

Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

65 East State Street, Suite 1000

Columbus, Ohio 43215

ckilgard@taftlaw.com

dparram@taftlaw.com

**COUNSEL FOR THE KROGER CO.**

Richard L. Sites

Ohio Hospital Association

155 East Broad Street, 15th

Columbus, Ohio 43215

ricks@ohanet.org

Matthew Warnock

Bricker & Eckler LLP

100 South Third Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

mwarnock@bricker.com

**COUNSEL FOR THE OHIO HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION**

Michael K. Lavanga

Garrett A. Stone

Stone Mattheis Xenopoulos & Brew, P.C.

1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.

8th Floor, West Tower

Washington, D.C. 20007-5201

mkl@smxblaw.com

gas@smxblaw.com

**COUNSEL FOR NUCOR STEEL MARION, INC.**

Barbara A. Langhenry

Harold A. Madorsky

Kate E. Ryan (Counsel of Record)

City of Cleveland

601 Lakeside Avenue – Room 106

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

blanghenry@city.cleveland.oh.us

hmadorsky@city.cleveland.oh.us

kryan@city.cleveland.oh.us

**COUNSEL FOR THE CITY OF CLEVELAND**

Kimberly W. Bojko

Danielle M. Ghiloni

Carpenter Lipps & Leland LLP

280 Plaza, Suite 1300

280 North High Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Bojko@carpenterlipps.com

ghiloni@carpenterlipps.com

**COUNSEL FOR OMAEG**

Lisa M. Hawrot

Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC

Century Centre Building

1233 Main Street, Suite 4000

Wheeling, West Virginia 26003

lhawrot@spilmanlaw.com

Derrick Price Williamson

Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC

1100 Bent Creek Blvd., Suite 101

Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania 17050

dwilliamson@spilmanlaw.com

Carrie M. Harris

Spilman Thomas & Battle, PLLC

310 First Street, Suite 1100

Roanoke, Virginia 24002-0090

charris@spilmanlaw.com

**COUNSEL FOR WAL-MART STORES EAST, LP AND SAM’S EAST, INC.**

Joseph P. Meissner

Attorney at Law

1223 W. 6th Street – 4th Floor

Cleveland, Ohio 44113

meissnerjoseph@yahoo.com

**COUNSEL FOR CITIZENS COALITION, CONSUMER PROTECTION ASSOCIATION, CLEVELAND HOUSING NETWORK, AND THE COUNCIL FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN GREATER CLEVELAND**

Thomas R. Hays

8355 Island Lane

Maineville, Ohio 45039

trhayslaw@gmail.com

**COUNSEL FOR LUCAS COUNTY**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Leslie Kovacik

Counsel for the City of Toledo

420 Madison Avenue

Toledo, Ohio 43604

lesliekovacik@toledo.oh.gov

**COUNSEL FOR THE CITY OF TOLEDO**

Glenn S. Krassen

(Counsel of Record)

Bricker & Eckler LLP  
1001 Lakeside Ave., Suite 1350

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

gkrassen@bricker.com

Dane Stinson

Dylan Borchers

Bricker & Eckler LLP

100 South Third Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

dstinson@bricker.com

dborchers@bricker.com

**COUNSEL FOR NORTHEAST OHIO PUBLIC ENERGY COUNCIL; OHIO SCHOOLS COUNCIL; AND, POWER4SCHOOLS**

M. Howard Petricoff (0008287)

(Counsel of Record)

Michael J. Settineri (0073369)

Gretchen L. Petrucci (0046608)

Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP

52 E. Gay Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

mhpetricoff@vorys.com

mjsettineri@vorys.com

glpetrucci@vorys.com

**COUNSEL FOR DYNEGY INC.**

Matthew R. Cox

Matthew Cox Law, Ltd.

88 East Broad Street, Suite 1560

Columbus, Ohio 43215

matt@matthewcoxlaw.com

**COUNSEL FOR THE COUNCIL OF SMALLER ENTERPRISES**

Madeline Fleisher

Staff Attorney

Environmental Law & Policy Center

21 W. Broad St., Suite 500

Columbus, OH 43215

mfleisher@elpc.org

**Counsel for the Environmental Law & Policy Center**

Trent Dougherty

1145 Chesapeake Avenue, Suite I

Columbus, OH 43212

tdougherty@theOEC.org

John Finnigan

128 Winding Brook Lane

Terrace Park, Ohio 45174

jfinnigan@edf.org

**COUNSEL FOR THE OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND**

Glen Thomas

1060 First Avenue, Suite 400

King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406

gthomas@gtpowergroup.com

Laura Chappelle

201 North Washington Square - #910

Lansing, Michigan 48933

laurac@chappeleconsulting.net

**ON BEHALF OF PJM POWER PROVIDERS GROUP**

M. Howard Petricoff

Michael J. Settineri

Gretchen L. Petrucci

Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP

52 East Gay Street

Columbus, Ohio 43216-1008

mhpetricoff@vorys.com

mjsettineri@vorys.com

glpetrucci@vorys.com

Cynthia Brady

Exelon Business Services

4300 Winfield Rd.

Warrenville, Illinois 60555

Cynthia.brady@exeloncorp.com

David I. Fein

Exelon Corporation

10 South Dearborn Street – 47th Fl.

Chicago, Illinois 60603

David.fein@exeloncorp.com

Lael E. Campbell

Constellation NewEnergy, Inc. and Exelon Corporation

101 Constitution Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20001

Lael.campbell@exeloncorp.com

**COUNSEL FOR EXELON GENERATION COMPANY, LLC AND CONSTELLATION NEWENERGY, INC.; PJM POWER PROVIDERS GROUP; THE ELECTRIC POWER SUPPLY ASSOCIATION; AND, RETAIL ENERGY SUPPLY ASSOCIATION**

Christopher J. Allwein

Margeaux Kimbrough

Kegler Brown Hill and Ritter LPA

65 East State Street – 1800

Columbus, Ohio 43215

callwein@keglerbrown.com

mkimbrough@keglerbrown.com

**COUNSEL FOR HARDIN WIND LLC, CHAMPAIGN WIND LLC AND BUCKEYE WIND LLC**

Todd M. Williams

Shindler, Neff, Holmes, Worline & Muhler, LLP

300 Madison Avenue

1200 Edison Plaza

Toledo, Ohio 43604

twilliams@snhslaw.com

Jeffrey W. Mayes

Monitoring Analytics, LLC

2621 Van Buren Avenue, Suite 160

Valley Forge Corporate Center

Eagleville, Pennsylvania 19403

Jeffrey.mayes@monitoringanalytics.com

**COUNSEL FOR INDEPENDENT MARKET MONITOR FOR PJM**

Sharon Theodore

Electric Power Supply Association

1401 New York Ave. NW 11th fl.

Washington, DC 20001

stheodore@epsa.org

**ON BEHALF OF THE ELECTRIC POWER SUPPLY ASSOCIATION**

Margeaux Kimbrough

Kegler Brown Hill and Ritter LPA

65 East State Street – 1800

Columbus, Ohio 43215

mkimbrough@keglerbrown.com

**COUNSEL FOR HARDIN WIND LLC, CHAMPAIGN WIND LLC AND BUCKEYE WIND LLC**

Kevin R. Schmidt

Energy Professionals of Ohio

88 East Broad Street, Suite 1770

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Schmidt@sppgrp.com

**COUNSEL FOR THE ENERGY PROFESSIONALS OF OHIO**

Christopher L. Miller

Gregory H. Dunn

Jeremy M. Grayem

Ice Miller LLP

250 West Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Christopher.miller@icemiller.com

Gregory.dunn@icemiller.com

Jeremy.grayem@icemiller.com

**COUNSEL FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF OHIO**

Craig I. Smith

Material Sciences Corporation

15700 Van Aken Blvd. – Suite 26

Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120

wttpmlc@aol.com

**COUNSEL FOR Material Sciences Corporation**

Joel E. Sechler

Carpenter Lipps & Leland

280 N. High Street, Suite 1300

Columbus, Ohio 43215

sechler@carpenterlipps.com

Gregory J. Poulos

EnerNOC, Inc.

471 E. Broad Street – Suite 1520

Columbus, Ohio 43054

gpoulos@enernoc.com

**COUNSEL FOR ENERNOC, INC.**

David J. Folk

Assistant Director of Law

City of Akron

161 S. High Street - Suite 202

Akron, OH 44308

dfolk@Akronohio.Gov

**COUNSEL FOR THE CITY OF AKRON**

Daniel W. Wolff

Richard LehFeldt

Crowell & Moring LLP

1001 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.

Washington, DC 20004

dwolff@crowell.com

rlehfeldt@crowell.com

**COUNSEL FOR CPV SHORE, LLC**

Thomas McNamee

Thomas Lindgren

Attorney General's Office

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

30 E. Broad Street, 16th Floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793

thomas.mcnamee@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

thomas.lindgren@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

**COUNSEL FOR THE STAFF OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

Gregory Price

Mandy Willey Chiles

Attorney Examiners

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

180 E. Broad Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Gregory.price@puc.state.oh.us

Mandy.chiles@puc.state.oh.us

**ATTORNEY EXAMINERS**